IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 2, 5 to 11, and 13 to 17, and add new Claims 19 and 20, as shown below.

1. (Currently Amended) An image display method for displaying images of a prescribed combination in image layout formats of a plurality of types, comprising:

a frequency storage step of storing frequency of use ~~with respect to a prescribed format from among~~ for each of the image layout formats, wherein the each of the image layout formats indicates a combination of a plurality of image display positions, and the frequency of use is different according to a combination of types of images displayed at ~~of~~ the plurality of image display positions ~~types~~;

a setting step of setting one of the image layout ~~format~~ formats, which is used in displaying the prescribed combination of images, based upon the ~~frequency~~ frequencies of use that ~~has~~ have been stored; and

a display step of displaying the prescribed combination of images on a display in the one of the image layout ~~format~~ formats that has been set.

2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step stores the frequency of use ~~of the prescribed image layout format is~~ in association with an observer.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein said setting step sets, for every observer, an image layout format having the highest frequency of use as an image layout format used to display the prescribed combination of images.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step counts the frequency of use of an image layout format at a timing at which the prescribed combination of images is displayed.

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step counts the frequency of use of an image layout format ~~after a change~~ at a timing at which the image layout format is changed.

6. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step counts the frequency of use of an image layout format, which is ~~being displayed~~ used in displaying the prescribed combination of images, at a timing at which said display ~~steps~~ step ends.

7. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step counts the frequency of use of an image layout format, which is ~~currently being displayed~~ used in displaying the prescribed combination of images, at a timing at which ~~the~~ an observer performs an operation for counting the frequency of use of the image layout format.

8. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step stores collectively the frequencies of use of the image ~~layouts~~ layout formats, which have been ~~displayed~~ used for displaying the prescribed combination of images for a plurality of observers, without distinguishing among the plurality of observers.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the images of a prescribed combination are medical ~~images~~ images, and the prescribed combination is a combination of images of the same type of examination.

10. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the images of a prescribed combination are medical images, the prescribed combination is a combination of images of a plurality of different types of examination, and said setting step sets an image layout format based upon the highest frequency of use from among frequencies of use of image layout formats of images of each type of examination.

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein when the number ~~of ranks~~ of frequencies of use capable of being stored has been set in ~~advance~~ advance, and images have been displayed in a new image layout format, said frequency storage step excludes the image layout format having the lowest frequency of use and adds on the frequency of use of the new image layout format.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 11, wherein the number of the ranks of the frequency of use is one.

13. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein in addition to display of images, a display of [[a]] an image layout format for notifying of the one of the image layout ~~format~~ formats that has currently been set is presented ~~at~~ in said display step.

14. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 13, further comprising an image layout format change step of changing the image layout format of the images currently being displayed on the display.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 14, further comprising a priority change step of changing a priority corresponding to the frequency of use;

wherein if the priority has been changed, the display of image layout format is changed in linked fashion ~~at~~ in said display step in response to an operation for changing the priority.

16. (Currently Amended) An image display apparatus comprising:

a display for displaying images;

a layout storage unit for storing a plurality of image layout formats, wherein each of the plurality of image layout formats indicates a combination of a plurality of image display positions;

a ~~processor~~ layout setting unit for setting [[a]] one of the plurality of image layout ~~of images~~ formats on said display; and

a frequency storage unit for storing frequency of use ~~of a layout format of the images~~ for the each of the plurality of image layout formats, wherein the frequency of use is different according to a combination of types of images displayed at the plurality of image display positions,

wherein said ~~processor~~ layout setting unit sets [[a]] an image layout format ~~of images~~ based upon the ~~frequency~~ frequencies of use.

17. (Currently Amended) A computer-executable program having program code for causing a computer to execute an image display method for displaying images of a prescribed combination in image layout formats of a plurality of types, said program comprising:

code for implementing a frequency storage step of storing frequency of use ~~with respect to a prescribed format from among~~ for each of the image layout formats, wherein the each of the image layout formats indicates a combination of a plurality of image display positions, and the frequency of use is different according to a combination of types of images displayed at ~~of~~ the plurality of image display positions ~~types~~;

code for implementing a setting step of setting one of the image layout ~~format~~ formats, which is used in displaying the prescribed combination of images, based upon the ~~frequency~~ frequencies of use that ~~has~~ have been stored; and

code for implementing a display step of displaying the prescribed combination of images on a display in the one of the image layout ~~format~~ formats that has been set.

18. (Original) A computer-readable storage medium storing the program set forth in claim 17.

19. (New) The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said layout setting unit further sets a plurality of buttons, each indicating one of the plurality of image layout formats, on said display.

20. (New) The apparatus according to claim 16, further comprising a selection unit for selecting one of a plurality of examination types;

wherein said layout setting unit sets the one of the plurality of image layout formats in response to the selection by said selection unit.